Poor quality ration supplied through PDS

*274. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether serious complaints have been received from various States about the poor quality ration being issued through the Public Distribution System, particularly for those below the poverty line;

(b) the details thereof for the year 2007, so far, State-wise; and

(c) the action taken/proposed to be taken by the Central Government to remedy the situation and for taking punitive action against those responsible therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) Some complaints have been received about supply of lower quality of foodgrains including imported red wheat through the Public Distribution System (PDS) in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. The complaints are about preference of consumers for white wheat and certain varieties/origins of rice.

(c) The Government has taken the following steps to ensure that only good quality foodgrains are issued for distribution under PDS:

1. The quality of imported wheat is thoroughly checked at the entry port to ensure conformity with PFA standards and Plant Quarantine regulations.

2. Adequate opportunities are provided to the officials of the State Governments/UT Administrations to inspect the stocks prior to lifting from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) godowns.

3. Instructions have been issued to all the State Governments/UT Administrations that an officer not below the rank of Inspector should be deputed to check the quality of foodgrains before lifting from the FCI godowns.

4. The samples of foodgrains are to be jointly drawn and sealed by the officers of the State Governments/UT Administrations and the FCI from the stocks for display at the counters of Fair Price Shops (FPSs) for the benefit of consumers.

5. The officers of the State Governments and the Ministry pay surprise checks to the FPSs, to oversee the quality of foodgrains being distributed through TPDS.

As and when complaints are received regarding poor quality of foodgrains being issued to the State Governments or distributed through PDS, FCI/concerned State Governments are asked to investigate the matter and take remedial measures including action against the delinquents under the FCI Staff Regulations and section 7 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.